"I don't know": Results of a Small-scale Survey on Teachers' Perspectives of the European Language Portfolio

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ABSTRACT: As one of the working groups belonging to the *VOICES of the European Teachers Network* (funded with support from the European Commission), Spanish members carried out an online survey of teachers' experiences, knowledge and perspectives on the European Language Portfolio (ELP). With over 250 respondents in the Barcelona metropolitan area, the answers indicate that while there is a widespread interest, there is also an extensive lack of information concerning this language teaching and learning instrument. This text first describes the ELP's general traits, provides a brief view into previous studies into the application of the ELP in the Spanish context, followed by an analysis of the responses to the online questionnaire and a discussion of findings.
Keywords: European Language Portfolio, plurilingualism, pluriculturality, teacher training.

"No sé": Resultados de un estudio a pequeña escala sobre las perpectivas de los profesores del portafolio europeo de lenguas

RESUMEN: Como parte del proyecto europeo *VOICES of the European Teachers Network* (financiado con el apoyo de la Comisión Europea), miembros de un grupo de trabajo llevaron a cabo una encuesta 'en línea', enfocada a profesores de enseñanza primaria, secundaria y universitaria, sobre sus experiencias, conocimientos y perspectivas del Portafolio Europeo de Lenguas (PEL). Con más de 250 respuestas de profesorado en el área metropolitana de Barcelona, las respuestas indican que, si bien existe un interés global, también se detecta la falta de información referente a este instrumento para la enseñanza de lenguas. Este artículo primero describe brevemente el PEL, mira a algunos de los estudios sobre la aplicación del PEL en el contexto español, y finalmente discute los resultados del cuestionario.
Palabras clave: Portafolio Europeo de Lenguas, plurilingüismo, pluriculturalidad, la formación del profesorado.

1. Introduction: what is the elp?

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) is a resource designed for use by individuals who are learning or have learned a language (see the Council of Europe's ELP website at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/elp/). This learning process may take place in formal

institutions (schools, language academies) or may be informal (autonomous, self-directed language learning). The ELP is conceived as an instrument for the language learning to be able to record and reflect on their language learning and cultural experiences, as well as documenting their progress; it also provides a means of assessing the learners' command of different languages (see also Little, Goullier & Hughes, 2011). This last trait links the ELP to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFRL) levels and provides an alternative (in theory) to expensive private assessment tests often required for higher education entry levels and job interviews across country frontiers (Council of Europe, 2001).

The European Languages Portfolio is conceived as a 'personal' document (records that accompany each individual through their lifelong learning trajectory) in which users can document their learning experiences, reflect on them according to objectives they have set themselves (often in collaboration with teachers), and carry out self-assessment using the parameters of the European Reference Framework for Languages (again, usually supported by teachers in formal education settings). The ELP is made up of three basic sections: a passport, biography and dossier. The 'Language Passport' demonstrates what the user is capable of doing in different languages. It contains a self-assessment of the user's linguistic competence, assessed through descriptors from the CEFRL, based on approximate levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2), information on diplomas and certificates obtained, along with a summary of his/her learning experiences. The 'Language Biography' is used to (self) describe the user's experience in each of the languages. It is designed to serve as a guide to the learner for setting goals, planning language learning and language use activities and for evaluating progress. The 'Dossier' is the section where examples of documents that illustrate language skills and knowledge are compiled (certificates, diplomas, written work, projects, audio recordings, videos, presentations, etc.). The language learner self-selects the artifacts that will be included here and which he or she feels best represents their dominion of language(s).

The beginnings of the European Language Portfolio can be traced to a Council of Europe symposium held in Rüschlikon, Switzerland, in 1991 Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 1992). Following this EU meeting, the Language Policy Division of the Council of Europe, (located in Strasbourg) supported the development and revision of the ELP by pan-European researchers and academics from 1998 until 2000, leading to the launch of the ELP during the European Year of Languages. The ELP's general aim is to serve as a tool to support the development of plurilingualism, pluriculturalism and learner autonomy. It is designed to promote linguistic and cultural diversity in Europe through (formal and informal) education and to contribute significantly to the dissemination of European goals, values, concepts and principles related to these distinctly EU traits. As García Doval, et al. (2004) point out, after an initial phase of promoting largely 'English language teaching' across Europe, a critical review then initiated a second phase of the ELP in the early 1980's that tended to "dirigirse hacia políticas favorecedoras de conceptos como el de la pluralidad lingüística europea, interculturalidad, comprensión mutua y cooperación europea, etc." [*policies that favor concepts such as European linguistic plurality, interculturality, mutual comprehension and European cooperation*] (p. 72). These goals were established at a time when the linguistic and cultural diversity of the population had most recently been foregrounded (García Doval, et al., 2004: Martínez Lirola, 2008).

> Fifty percent of the world's out-of-school children live in communities where the language of schooling is rarely, if ever, used at home. This underscores the biggest challenge to achieving Education for All (EFA): a legacy of non-productive practices that lead to low levels of learning and high levels of dropout and repetition. In these circumstances, an increase in resources, although necessary, would not be sufficient to produce universal completion of a good-quality primary school programme. (World Bank, 2005; cited in Dooly & Vallejo, 2009: 6)

In the years that followed, in conjunction with the European Validation Committee, national education stakeholders presented ELP models, with specific features to each nation-state, to be validated and accredited in language versions representing all European Languages. However, in most cases (including Spain), the ELP models represent language learning aims and resources for young language learners (principally primary and early childhood, lower and upper secondary education and, in a few cases, adult learners –mostly university students). ELP models for vocational purposes, which was a principal aim of the initiative (as an aid to widespread mobility throughout the European Union) has been less successful institutionally. Additionally, most of the ELP models are developed and implemented by educational institutions (national and local educational authorities, universities, schools and group of schools, partnerships with leading European educational institutions), implying that another aim of the portfolio (to validate informal language learning) is still not that common.

In Spain, the ELP was officially 'launched' by the Spanish Ministry of Education in 2001 (validated in 2003 and 2004) with the hope that not only would the ELP serve as a resource for language learning and teaching but also as a means of helping raise language awareness of individual proficiency levels in multiple languages, beginning as young as early childhood education (pre-school). This is considered especially important in a country where there are numerous languages co-existing among the nation's population.

> [An] analysis of Spain's linguistic minorities is quite problematic, especially due to the linguistic diversity which can be found in Spain and the heterogeneous official and social status that these languages enjoy within the diverse regions. We have to consider, first, that the country is organised as a "nation of nations" (this term is currently at the centre of a long political debate), composed by autonomous regions, many of them with their own language. There are a total of five co-official languages (which are legally recognised along with Spanish), three popularly recognised languages which are not legally recognised (but have regional support) and five existent minority language groups with a minimum of 3000 speakers. (Mercator Media, 2007; quoted in Dooly & Vallejo, 2008: 9)

As Canga Alonso (2011) underscores, the ELP puts emphasis on the social interaction and overt awareness of language learning, based on three main principles:
   a). Learner empowerment by transferring part of the responsibility for teaching-learning to pupils by giving them different options and support.
   b) Learner reflection to make students think about what they are learning and why it is necessary for them.
   c) Appropriate target language use by using the foreign language for genuine communicative purposes (Little, Ridley y Ushioda, 2002; Little, 2003 y 2007. (p. 138)

The use of the ELP usually begins in primary education where students are introduced to very simple questionnaires and 'user-friendly' self-assessment grids, moving on to more complex analytical, metalinguistic reflection of the portfolio by secondary school. This may be followed (voluntarily) with an adult portfolio (for instance, the 'Languages for Jobs' portfolio developed by the thematic working group for the European strategic framework for education and training 2020). [1]

2. Literature Review: Implementation of ELP in Spain

Closely following the launch of the portfolio in Spain, Cassany (2002) commented on the results of the Spanish implementation pilot project of the pilot project of the ELP (also in Little and Perclovà, 2002). Cassany emphasized the importance of adapting the ELP to the school context in order to optimize its efficacy for supporting language learning. Another point that was highlighted by the author is the general feeling that its implementation is quite time-consuming for both the teachers and the students. This corroborates a general opinion that was echoed in our survey results collected 13 years later; (discussed in more detail further on). "The amount of time to introduce the ELP into courses caused a "work overload" and caused de-motivation in student and teacher alike" (Wheller, n/d: 8). This coincides with a similar statement by Martínez Lirola from 2008:

> La principal desventaja del uso del portfolio está relacionada con el tiempo que a los alumnos les lleva hacer las actividades que forman el portfolio, hecho que hace que no siempre les sea posible tener la carpeta de aprendizaje al día. De manera similar, como docentes la principal desventaja de este modo de evaluación es el tiempo que nos lleva preparar cada una de esas actividades y evaluarlas. (Martínez Lirola, 2008, p. 33)

> [*The main disadvantage of using the portfolio is related to the time that the students need to do the activities that make up the portfolio which means that the dossier may not always been up to date. Similarly, the main disadvantage for the teachers in this type of evaluation is the time needed to prepare and evaluate each of these activities.* (Martínez Lirola, 2008, p. 33)]

Nonetheless, despite the amount of time and effort needed for the portfolio implementation, Cassany has this to say about the ELP in Spain, "Our work in the future will be to diversify, to experiment and to adapt this valuable framework to our diverse needs" (2002: 24). Indeed, interesting and motivating cases of adaptation to specific contexts in the Spanish education system have been documented (cf. Martínez López and Cantero García, 2013, discuss the concept of 'authentic assessment' in Social Science and Language Learning; Canga Alonso, 2011, describes the application of a language portfolio and students with learning difficulties; cf. Pierce McMahon & Durán, 2014, outline the use of the ELP with university architecture and engineering students).

In a state-of-the-question article by a student scholar related to the VOICES project (presented as her final research project at the end of her undergraduate degree), Gil (2013)

found that most of the documented cases of implementation of the ELP in Spain consisted of individualized adaptations of specific aspects of the ELP, with few cases of implementation of the ELP as a whole. Gil further notes that there is not enough systematic documentation of implementation cases to state unequivocally whether the ELP can be considered a successful instrument for language learning support or not. As Gil points out, the majority of publications on studies about the ELP consist of individual case studies and of these, most of them deal with the portfolio as an assessment tool, closely followed by studies into raised student awareness through reflection on their own language learning process. There are also anecdotal studies into the ELP as an instrument for promoting cultural diversity and cultural knowledge of others. There is very little emphasis, however, on the concept of the portfolio as a personal documentation tool for lifelong language learning (an original aim of the ELP).

In her review of publications concerning ELP implementation in Spain, Gil found that the majority of experiences that had been written up as dissemination or research publications dealt with the use of the ELP in primary education, although examples of its use at secondary and tertiary education were also available (cf. Martínez Lirola, 2012; Pierce McMahon & Durán, 2014). There have been ample opportunities for teacher development concerning how to make best use of the ELP, but again, most of the articles discussed in Gil's review deal with the use of the portfolio as a means of evaluation (of both process and product) of language learning. This use is linked to the way in which the ELP facilitates the setting of learning objectives and makes these more transparent to the students.

In the Spanish context in particular, the reflexive element of the ELP was considered a positive aspect to help students become more aware of their (and fellow classmates') cultural and linguistic background as teachers are increasingly faced with heterogenous student profiles in their classroom and need resources to support plurilingualism (and the diverse resources these bring) in their classrooms.
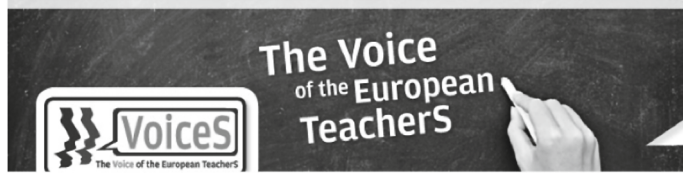
3. The National Group Work Online Survey

The Spanish work group administered an online survey of primary and secondary teachers throughout Catalonia (see the outline of questions in annex). The survey was made available in both Catalan and English. There were 244 respondents to the survey provided in Catalan while only eight teachers responded to the English questionnaire. Survey respondents were first asked some general background information (gender, age range, current teaching status, subjects taught, and so forth).

Use of European Language Portfolio

This survey is part of the thematic field of plurilingualism of VoiceS is a Lifelong Learning Programme, funded by the European Commission

*Required

Background Information

General participant information

Please state your gender *

☐ Male
☐ Female

Please indicate your age range: *

○ 17 or under
○ 18 to 25
○ 26 to 30
○ 30 to 35
○ 36 to 40
○ 41 to 45
○ 46 to 50
○ 51 to 55
○ 56 to 60

Fig. 1. Online survey in English

Next the respondents answered questions specifically related to their knowledge and familiarity of the European Language Portfolio followed by questions concerning whether they used the ELP or not and if so, specifically how they apply it to their own teaching context.
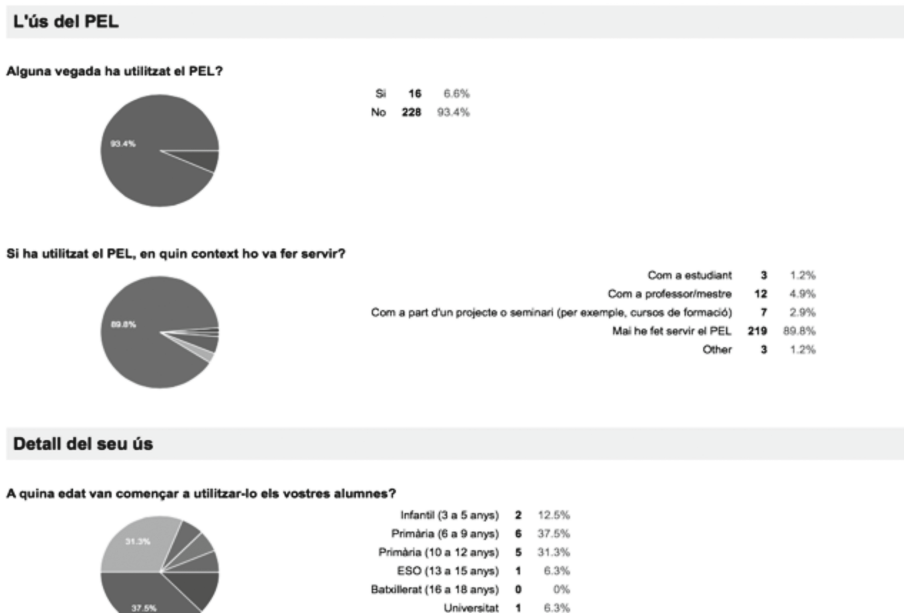
L'ús del PEL

Alguna vegada ha utilitzat el PEL?

Sí	16	6.6%
No	228	93.4%

Si ha utilitzat el PEL, en quin context ho va fer servir?

Com a estudiant	3	1.2%
Com a professor/mestre	12	4.9%
Com a part d'un projecte o seminari (per exemple, cursos de formació)	7	2.9%
Mai he fet servir el PEL	219	89.8%
Other	3	1.2%

Detall del seu ús

A quina edat van començar a utilitzar-lo els vostres alumnes?

Infantil (3 a 5 anys)	2	12.5%
Primària (6 a 9 anys)	6	37.5%
Primària (10 a 12 anys)	5	31.3%
ESO (13 a 15 anys)	1	6.3%
Batxillerat (16 a 18 anys)	0	0%
Universitat	1	6.3%

Fig. 2. Online survey in Catalan

Finally, the survey proposed questions about the respondents' 'perspectives' (their views and opinions) of the ELP (usefulness, accessibility, etc.).

3.1. Respondent profile

The majority of the teachers who answered were female (85%), between the ages of 30 to 50 and currently holding a teaching post (over 95%). The majority of the teachers worked in primary education (65%), followed by early childhood education (27%). Very few of the teachers were involved in university teaching and only 5 stated that they work in other areas (continued education or vocational education, for instance). The subject areas in which the respondents teach were more diverse. 30% work in languages (Spanish, Catalan and foreign languages), 20% indicated that they worked in 'other areas' (not defined) with approximately 10% working in specific areas such as physical education, geography, physical education or social studies. However, the largest group pertained to general education.

3.2. Familiarity with the ELP, its users and its use

Interestingly, the group of teachers was quite evenly divided between having heard of the portfolio (48.4% of the Catalan respondents; 7 of the 8 English speakers, all of whom were predominantly foreign language teachers) while 46.3% of the Catalan respondents had never heard of the portfolio. 5.3% stated that there were not sure.

Of the teachers who reported that they were familiar with the portfolio, most of them had first heard of the portfolio through other teachers, followed by continued education as the second most reported source of knowledge. Other sources are participation in projects, administration, Internet, and university classes - all of which were less than 10% of the listed source of information.

In contrast to their reported familiarity with the portfolio, over 50% of the Catalan respondents indicated that they had no information whatsoever concerning the overall purpose of the ELP, followed by 26% who stated that they had vague notions of the exact proposed application of the language portfolio. 16.8% said that they were quite informed about the portfolio's aims (aptly informed for teachers in their profession) while 6.2 thought they were more informed than most. Significantly, when asked about whether they felt well-informed concerning its use (how to apply it in their own teaching context), slightly over half of the respondents indicated that they had absolutely no idea of how to use it (55.3%), along with 31% who stated that they were very poorly informed on how to use the ELP in their teaching practice. Among the seven EFL teachers, none of them claimed to have above average knowledge of how to use the portfolio (five said they have average knowledge and two stated that they had little knowledge).

Perhaps this is not surprising given that none of them had any experience in using the ELP as a teacher (two said that they had some experience with the portfolio as students and one teacher had received short training course about the ELP, although more information was not provided). Among the Catalan-speaking informants, 228 indicated that they had never used the portfolio, in comparison to a mere 16 who had some experience with it. Most of these experiences were in the teacher role, with a few who had received some additional training (seminars, workshops). Of these few teachers who had some experience in using the portfolio, 68% used them at primary education level (youngest age at 6 years of age, no students were in kindergarten or early childhood education).

Another significant feature that emerged from the answers was that among the very few respondents who had used the portfolio with their students, 75% of these experiences were individual initiatives (only four teachers indicated that their experience with the ELP stemmed from a team experience). Similarly, of those who have had experience with the portfolio, apart from being an individual initiative, in most cases it was a one-off case (25% of the few users did so only once, 56.3% had used it more than once but no longer did so and only three of the 251 (Catalan and English-responding) teachers were currently using the portfolio with their students.

As it has been indicated in previous studies, the use of the portfolio appears to be quite segmented. Only two respondents indicated that they had used or were currently using the entire portfolio (passport, bibliography and personal dossier). The majority of teachers indicated that their use of the portfolio was limited to evaluation, in particular the 'I can do' statements (more specific details were not provided).

3.3. Individual perspectives about the portfolio

Following the questions about their familiarity and use of the ELP, the informants were given questions to elicit their personal and professional perspectives concerning the language teaching and learning instrument. These signify relevant input; as Hall & Hewitt-Gervais

(1999) point out, "there has been little research documenting the connection between teachers' attitudes about portfolios and use of portfolios" (p.1). In our survey, the first question, "Do you think the portfolio is adaptable across all subjects?" correlates previous responses concerning a lack of information about the portfolio: 64% stated that they did not know the answer, with only 30% indicating that they felt it was a valuable tool that could be used transversally across disciplines.

The respondents were asked to give their opinions about whether they thought the portfolio was easy to use, whether it required time and whether it had a significant learning curve in order to learn to apply it to teaching practices, whether it was worth the effort in relation to the time and effort and the amount of staff support needed. The answers indicate a predominant view that the portfolio is quite time-consuming to learn (for teachers and students) and that there is a lack of information on its use and access to support and complementary resources. At the same time, several of the teachers (25%) state that, despite being rather time-consuming, the portfolio is a worthwhile teaching and learning instrument (versus 12.5% who feel that it is not worth the effort that must be expended to learn and apply it). Some of the teachers (12%) felt that the portfolio would work better if combined with technology; similarly 11% highlighted the need for administrative support (head of school, head of studies, other staff members, etc.). Finally, despite a significant number of negative observations about the ELP, 88% of the teachers who answered the survey stated that they would like to learn more about the European Language Portfolio.

4. Discussion

One of the first observations that can be discerned from the overall responses of the survey is the self-described feeling of being insufficiently informed about the European Language Portfolio. Likewise, the responses seem to indicate a general lack of interest. However, the individual responses point to a correlation between lack of information and lack of interest, that is to say, the lack of interest is not due to previous experience (1st or second-hand) which may have led to conclusions that the ELP is ineffective. Rather, the lack of apparent interest in using the ELP is due to unfamiliarity with its purpose and how to best use it. This corroborates similar findings concerning teachers' understandings and perspectives on the ELP carried out in France ten years ago (Methy, 2005) in which teachers indicated that they did not use the tool because they felt that the ELP was not motivating for their students but, in a large part, this was due to their lack of information about the workings of the portfolio.

Another significant issue for the teachers was the fact that there is not any formal accreditation behind the ELP use (neither for the teachers who implement it nor the students who are encouraged to use it). A similar issue was found in a study on the perception of efficacy of portfolio use carried out in 1996 by Benoit and Yang. These authors argue that a principal issue is the lack of reliability in both the selection of criterion and in the scoring of tasks (Benoit & Yang, 1996). Indeed, this was one of the challenges pinpointed in a commissioned review of the ELP. And while it is difficult to discuss overall efficacy of portfolio use, principally because most research lies on self-reported results by either teachers or students, without any longitudinal, contrastive studies into large-scale data, it

is an important challenge that must be faced and which has been recognized by the panel commissioned to revise the ELP.

> The one pedagogical issue that stood out above all others was self-assessment, apparently for two reasons. First, the majority of ELPs developed for piloting lacked the detailed self-assessment checklists that were central to the Swiss model, and teachers as well as learners found it difficult to relate learning progress in the short and medium term to the general descriptors of the CEFR's self- assessment grid (…). Secondly, self-assessment proved difficult in pedagogical traditions that were strongly teacher-led and did not encourage learners to share in the setting of learning targets and the evaluation of learning progress. This remains one of the principal pedagogical challenges to the large-scale implementation of the ELP. (Little, Goullier, & Hughes, 2011: 9).

This correlates with the responses to our survey. For instance, the respondents' focus on the ELP as an assessment tool for teachers to use (top-down approach) rather than as a self-initiated documentation tool can perhaps be linked to a lack of general understanding of how to facilitate this type of interaction with the tool. As early as 1999, Gardner and Miller pointed out the inherent difficulties involved in self-assessment. According to these authors, assessment of self-access language learning is seen as particularly challenging; they identify the five main difficulties:

- The complexity of self-access systems (due to their individualisation),
- The uniqueness of self-access systems,
- Data collection (as there is less control than in a classroom situation over what learners do and when the do it),
- Data analysis (because often less is known about the learner),
- Purposes of evaluation (which are generally on learning rather than teaching and on resource management). (Gardner & Miller, 1999, cited in Reinders & Lázaro, 2007, para. 4).

It seems that teachers need to be ensured continuous education and resources to help them use the ELP to support and enhance learner autonomy. Research shows that learner autonomy is best fostered through significant teacher support that includes involving them in setting the learning objectives and helping them find the appropriate language learning activities (Sahinkarakas, Yumru & Inozu, 2010). According to Kohonen (2000), the ELP can be one of the best means of doing this as long as there is significant preparation for the teacher to do so (and which appears to be missing, at least according to this sample survey).

The survey answers also brought to a fore the fact that there is significant diversity in procedure of implementation of the ELP (this was also highlighted in Gil's state-of-the-question review). Nonetheless, this lack of unity regarding its implementation has been seen as both an advantage and a disadvantage. Its flexibility of application can be advantageous (the portfolio is adaptable to the contextualized needs of each case) while at the same time it does not necessarily contribute to a systemic collection of case models that other teachers can consult. As the authors of the commissioned review of the ELP point out:

The scope of ELP implementation has been similarly diverse: in some cases whole education systems have been targeted, while in others implementation has been limited to a single institution. And there has been no single focus of implementation. Sometimes the ELP has been used to develop learner autonomy, and self-assessment has complemented more traditional methods of assessment; sometimes it has been used to promote a whole-school approach to developing the plurilingualism of pupils, in an attempt to overcome the traditional compartmentalised approach to language teaching; and sometimes it has been used as a means of tailoring language provision to the needs of individual learners or specific learner groups. (Little, et al., 2011: 11)

According to Little, et al., (2011), when the ELP is introduced to the class workload as an "extra", rather than as an integrated part of the curriculum and with clearly formulated terms related to the CEFRL it is more likely to fail. This can also be linked to the amount of time needed for its implementation; indeed, time needed for its implementation was seen by a large portion of the respondents in the survey as an an obstacle to its successful implementation (cf. Martínez Lirola, 2008), in particular if the students and teachers are attempting to complete 'regular' school work, and additionally, ELP activities that are considered to be complementary rather than an cohesive part of the curriculum. This same challenge has been highlighted by more recent work from Reyes Álvarez Bernández and Monereo Font (2016) who argue that:

(…) el principal problema de estas propuestas es que la simple toma de consciencia, sin otros referentes que promueven el cambio, pueden conducir a un ejercicio de trivialización (y a aprendizajes superficiales) que no lleguen a producir cambios reales en las prácticas (…). (Reyes Álvarez Bernández & Monereo Font, 2016, p. 164)

[*the main problem with these proposals is that the simple raising of awareness, without other references that promote change, can lead to trivialization of the exercises (and superficial learning) which does not actually lead to real changes in practices* (Reyes Álvarez Bernández & Monereo Font, 2016, p. 164)]

Many of the responses to the survey support Schärer's (2007) observation that the portfolio, as an European-wide teaching and learning language resource still faces some important challenges. The author mentions the following key points: a) not all learners and teachers favour a learner-centred approach; b) the ELP is not a viable proposition if it is used mechanically to check progress; c) to maintain motivation, the ELP should yield tangible benefits for learners, teachers and schools; d) a gap between the curriculum requirements and ELP principles may be difficult to manage; f) enough time and space should be allowed in the working routine so that it is viable to use the ELP; g) the status of the ELP needs to be defined on the broad educational level as well as in the local context; h) there must be sustained learner and teacher support to ensure long-term effects.

Other difficulties that have been associated with the use of portfolios coincide with issues pointed out by the survey respondents in our study. For instance, teachers may be concerned about time commitment (Sweet, 1992); they may feel there is a lack of unders-

tanding about how to best integrate portfolios in the classroom; concern about time and needed training and support; insufficient criteria to judge student work (Aschbacher, 1993); lack of planning for assessment (Popp, 1999); and difficulty of deciding upon what content to include in portfolios (Koretz, Stecher, Klein, & McCaffrey, 1994).

5. FINAL WORDS

Literature reviews indicate that there are definite benefits that can be gained by the use of portfolio assessment such as the ELP (see Ancess & Darling-Hammond, 1994; Büyükdu-man & Şirin, 2010; Burner, 2014; Romova & Andrew, 2011). To name a few: a) teachers can have better evidence of students' strengths and weaknesses and current learning levels; b) standardization of assessment criteria in entire schools; and c) increased use of 'real-life' tasks in the classroom. While the results of this survey cannot be extrapolated beyond the context in which it has been applied (Catalonia, Spain), some significant observations can be made. Use of the ELP can contribute to a greater sense of ownership concerning the language learning process; it can promote increased awareness of plurilingualism as a cognitive and communicative resource; it can help develop greater learner autonomy that will, in turn, contribute to enhanced lifelong learning and it can enable a closer collaboration between teacher and learner(s). However, in order for the ELP to be used efficiently, there is a need for specific training and instruction, complemented with easily accessible resources such as a model samples bank, suggestions for reconciling existing curricula with the ELP implementation and ideas for preliminary student-training prior to ELP use.

Furthermore, in order to address the perceived one-sidedness of teachers' time and effort spent on preparing and assessing and to better promote self-learning through higher student involvement, it is recommended that user-friendly online resources for the students are made available. These could include easy-to-read instructions and suggestions for self-assessment, accompanied with examples of 'matching' between evidence of language use and CEFRL descriptors, free and standardized online storage space for high-density data (e.g. video files) for documentation of own language use as well as easily expedited 'passport' entries, based on self and institutional assessments of CEFRL levels.

6. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Appendix

Section 1: Background information
- Please state your gender (male/female/prefer not to state)
- Please indicate age range (ranges provided between 0 to over 65)
- Are you currently teaching? (yes/no)
- What subject do you teach? (different areas provided to choose from)
- What education level do you teach (different levels provided to choose from)

Section 2: Their information about ELP use
- Have you ever used the ELP (yes/no). If no, the respondent was sent to the section on 'perspectives'.
- If the respondent indicated yes, they were asked:
- Education level it was used
- Subject area it was used
- Whether it used individually or as part of a team
- Frequency of use
- How it was used (single component, all three sections, for evaluative purposes, etc.)
- Degree of satisfaction with use (from very satisfactory to completely unsatisfactory)

Section 3: Perspectives about the ELP
- All the respondents were asked
- if they felt they were informed about the ELP (from very informed to complete lack of information
- where it is best used (across subjects, limited only to language areas , limited to foreign language areas)
- Ease of use
- Amount of time needed to learn and use
- Worth the effort
- An up-to-date or outdated concept
- Needs support
- Informants were also asked how they learnt about the ELP (online information, from colleagues, through education authorities or government agencies, etc.) and whether they would be interested in more information and/or educational opportunities concerning the ELP.